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## **2-1-1 Day Celebrates Free, Easy Access to Help**

(Madison, WI) February 11 is 2-1-1 Day, a special day to recognize the nearly one-hundred well-trained volunteers and staff members who answer calls for help at Wisconsin's seven 2-1-1 contact centers. More than 230,000 Wisconsin residents called 2-1-1 during 2015 to find out about critical health and human services according to Charlene Mouille, executive director of 2-1-1 Wisconsin, Inc.

2-1-1 is the free statewide information and referral number any resident can call any time of day, seven days a week. Trained specialists at contact centers in Milwaukee, Madison, La Crosse, Green Bay, Appleton, Wausau and Wisconsin Rapids work together to answer calls from anywhere in the state. After a caller's specific needs are identified, 2-1-1 specialists search a statewide database of resources and then provide the caller with information about how to contact the closest and most appropriate resource. Of the 58,519 calls received during the fourth quarter of 2015, 19% of the callers were referred to food pantries and 8% to community shelters. Other questions pertained to payment assistance for rent and electricity, aging and disability issues, housing needs and other topics such as mental health/addictions; health care; legal, consumer and public safety services; clothing, personal and household needs; individual, family and community support; and transportation.

"2-1-1's statewide database of more than 13,000 health and human resources is very comprehensive and accurate thanks to the efforts of our local contact centers in Wisconsin," Mouille said. "2-1-1 is a very valuable service that effectively and efficiently connects every citizen in the state with resources they might need at some point in their lives. It can connect us in times of statewide emergencies, flu outbreaks and natural disasters as well as when we have very basic needs for assistance."

"We do need increased financial support to continue offering this valuable service to all residents of Wisconsin at the level of quality we believe is necessary," Mouille said.

For more information about 2-1-1 Wisconsin or to locate your nearest contact center, visit [www.211wisconsin.org](http://www.211wisconsin.org).

## **About 2-1-1**

2-1-1 information and referral services were first introduced in Wisconsin in 2001 in Dane, Milwaukee, Racine and Waukesha counties. In 2004, 2-1-1 Wisconsin, Inc. was granted authority by the Public Service Commission to plan, implement and oversee statewide use of the 2-1-1 dialing code. Free statewide service became a reality in 2011 with the implementation of a statewide database and phone system connecting all local contact centers in Wisconsin. Most of the contact centers have been funded in the past by local United Way organizations, other non-profit organizations, local businesses and foundations, health care providers and local and county government entities. Statewide service is administered by United Way of Wisconsin. 2-1-1 service was launched by United Way almost 20 years ago as a free, confidential, user-friendly number connecting people to essential resources. Today, 2-1-1 serves more than 283 million Americans-- more than 90% of our nation -- in all 50 states, plus Washington DC and Puerto Rico.

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